

The State Attorney General has been asked by Douglas County for a legal opinion to establish whether assisting in the birth of a baby outside of an established, licensed hospital, constitutes practicing medicine without a license.

The request was prompted by the recent death of an infant following a home birth.

The following letter was written in response to a series of articles that appeared in the Journal-World. Molly Van Hee recently gave birth to a healthy baby girl in the privacy of her own home.

Dear Editor,

The recent articles on home birth appeared to be inaccurate at best and biased at worst. Any interested person who studies home birth would find that there are medical professionals comparable to those quoted who currently aid in and/or fully support home birth. I know such people personally.

The damage or death of a newborn child is a difficult experience for parents wherever it happens. To suggest that giving birth at the hospital is the best way to avoid this is inconclusive. Our country does not have infant mortality rates to be proud of. We compare unfavorably with many other countries, some where home birth occurs extensively. The risks to a new baby that are more common in the hospital setting include infection and medical over-intervention. The statistics comparing home births to hospital ones simply do not warrant the negative attitudes highlighted in the articles.

As for the local people that the newspaper calls "lay midwives", to my knowledge they neither talk people into home birth nor "actively intervene" to keep them from going to the hospital. Nor do they take money, apply eye drops, give episiotomies and stitches, or of all things, perform Caesarean sections! Expect-

LETTERS

tant parents in the Lawrence area who choose home birth do so at their own risk and for their own reasons.

This is not to say that I feel my child or I deserve second best after choosing to give birth at home. As one of many parents who made that decision after careful thought and study, I do not believe myself to be either uncaring or irresponsible toward my child as stated in the articles.

I am not opposed to home birth attendants being licensed. On the contrary, I am appalled by the unwillingness of our local medical community to support such people. This refusal of those in control of medical technology to provide it at home births creates a vacuum for lay people to fill out of pure necessity. Far better for our local doctors to work to provide legal and safe home births than to try to talk people out of them.

I call for the local medical community to immediately examine the roots of its objections to home birth. Doctor Steven Bruner was quoted as saying, "There is nothing wrong with home delivery if it's done right, but you have to go to the Netherlands to get it right...they've got the technology, but they've melded it with the home." I would like to add Canada, England, and the Stephen Gaskin Farm in Tennessee as other places where home births take place with safe results.

If medically safe home birth is possible anywhere, certainly it is possible here. For the many of us desiring this option, why is it not available?



Dear Public Notice:

I was very disappointed when I read your article about the Lawrence Housing Authority and the Section 8 program pending.

Your article lacks accurate information, picks up on issues out of context and presents a most unfair picture of the Lawrence Housing Authority. You set out to build a critical case against the Authority and me, and you accomplished what you set out to do. I wasted my time giving you an interview, and I will never do so again.

Now as to Abner Purney with the HUD area office, his statements would raise doubts about the Authority's intentions for Section 8. My personal communications with that office have been with other officials on Section 8. Did it not occur to you that since the Section 8 has not had the success other housing programs have, and so few units have been leased, and it's the only program available right now that it is HUD's job to push the program over-much. Mr. Purney's office is closing in May, I'm sure he wants a transfer to the next HUD office. You didn't expect HUD to take the credit for any oversights in communications with the LHA's which may have resulted in not contacting or leasing units, did you?

As for Mr. Purney's comment that we should do anything necessary in rent studies if we want the program, studies have been done. The LHA did all this work, no one else.

Since the original application for 40 units, the Lawrence Housing Authority has presented every stage to HUD with the same opinion, the fair market rents are too low to work in our community. We did not know HUD could or would approve higher increases until Mr. Smith suggested that this might be possible. If the League told you otherwise, they gave you incorrect information. It was not possible to request the increases as Mr. Smith suggested by a study. This is for programs in operation. The method for requesting the 19% increase was not previously known to the LHA or HUD-could hardly have been information we would have available to us without HUD communicating it to us.

As to your making an issue of the amount or possibility of initial financing as brought up by Philip Kissam, this is not an issue and has never been an area of concern for the Housing Authority. Mr. Kissam has been told this in the past. I am tired of trying to tell Mr. Kissam anything.

I have always been aware that development financing was available for the first fiscal year of the program. My Section 8 Handbook says \$275.00 per unit, but if Mr. Purney says \$200.00, then \$200.00 it is. However, since this was not the problem, there was and is no point in discussing it. You failed to ask me about this in our conversation, and I feel you owe an apology for that.

Only someone totally unfamiliar with housing would compare the Lawrence community to that of Topeka. You neglected to mention Topeka's prior involvement with landlords through leasing programs before entering the Section 8. And you neglected to comment on a very similar community's experience with the Section 8, Manhattan.

I work too hard and care too much about the Lawrence Housing Authority to accept this type of criticism without recourse. I personally resent being used as a routine exercise in apprentice journalism or for the entertainment of amateur citizen participants in public housing.

Thank you for your attention.

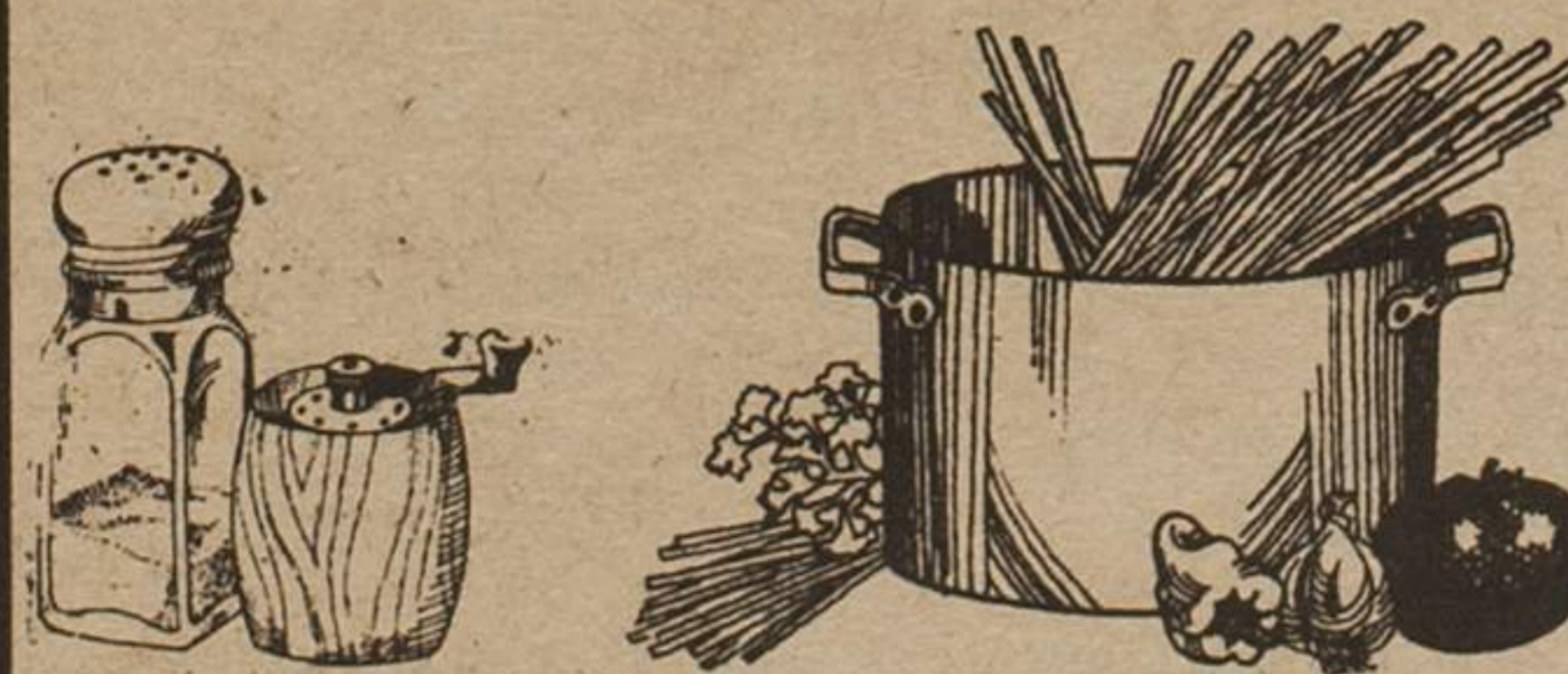
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